

Being a Proud Academic Dinosaur: My Career in the Foundations of Education

By Edward Janak

Introduction

From 1993 to 2002 I was a high school teacher of English in South Carolina. Due to a lack of relevancy of the material as presented by my instructors, I had little interest in the Foundations of Education through my entire bachelor's degree, and most of my master's. To me, there was no connection between what the bunch of dead White men discussed in my foundations texts and the hundreds of active, diverse teenagers I faced on a daily basis. Without having been taught to explicitly make the praxis connection between theory and practice, it was easy for me to dismiss thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, George Counts, or Theodore Brameld. Instead, I focused on what I had been trained to do: finding ways of making great literature relevant to my students, and finding ways of expanding the canon of what was considered great literature. I deemed my teaching successful when my students walked out of my room commenting that "they didn't know Shakespeare

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could be ‘cool,’” or that “public speaking could be ‘fun.’” I didn’t notice that I was doing with literature what I was not doing with foundational material.

At the end of my master’s program, I took two foundations courses that completely changed my outlook on the discipline as well as my career trajectory. I was fortunate enough to work with two professors who insisted on finding relevance between their foundational material and my teaching practice, effectively “hooking” me on Educational Foundations. For the first time, I saw that the foundational figures (Dewey, Counts, and Brameld) had relevance to my practice, and could inform my daily decision-making. I was making the paraxial connections I hitherto had not; for example, I was able to see that my use of the project method was not new, and that Willam Heard Kilpatrick had some suggestions that could improve my use. I understood that my self-definition of being “progressive” was very limited without an eye towards producing good citizens.

Today I study and engage the foundations of education in both my scholarship and my teaching. In 2002 I left my high school English classroom in South Carolina to work in a college of education in Wyoming, in which I am primarily engaged in teacher training at the undergraduate level. At the undergraduate level I teach both the introductory course, here called “Diversity and the Politics of Schooling,” and the pre-methods course, here called “Teacher as Practitioner.” I make a point in both courses to actively infuse historical perspectives through my presentations and required reading selections; I demand my students ground their thinking about schooling and their future practice historically in spite of the fact that such thinking is no longer required by national accrediting agencies.

In this article, I share my narrative with Educational Foundations for the past thirty years. It spans from being an undergraduate pre-service educator in the 1980s, to being a master’s degree student and a doctoral student in Educational Foundations from the 1990s and early 2000s, to being a full-time faculty member in Educational Studies for the past twelve years. The narrative is a blend of historiography, storytelling, and autobiography. It explores how the study of Educational Foundations, particularly in teacher education, has been gradually but systematically pushed to the side in favor of more current, but less meaningful, study. Colleges of education today provide students with the latest information on what is considered current best practice, but as this is not grounded foundationally students never understand the “why” behind these practices, making such study less meaningful. Ultimately, my narrative is designed to serve as one means of informing current discussions on how to avoid Educational Foundations from becoming extinct in colleges and schools of education across the U.S.

Earning the Degree

In the 1980s, as an undergraduate pre-service teacher in New York State, out of the half-dozen required education courses, only one was in Foundations of Education. Typical of introductory courses even today, it was taught in a giant lecture hall

with over 100 other students. The professor fit the type parodied so often in popular culture, exemplified by the character of Professor Binns in the Harry Potter series. He put his students to sleep by presenting dry lectures of names and dates that had seemingly no significance to becoming a high school English teacher. In juxtaposition, professors across multiple programs chose high interest content, which I felt directly prepared me for the classroom world that even then I could envision. However, the lack of relevance in curriculum and in instructional approach left me disinterested in the study of Educational Foundations for years to come.

For a variety of reasons, I decided to pursue a teaching career in South Carolina. I also decided to pursue a master's degree in secondary education from the University of South Carolina. The program of study in the mid-1990s was clearly outlined with two required Educational Foundations courses. Due to my prior negative experience with Educational Foundations as an undergraduate back in New York, I avoided taking them until the very end of my program.

Both courses changed my life in two significant ways: first, rather than make my master's education a stopping point in higher education, I decided to continue studying for a doctorate. Second, rather than continue work in secondary education, Educational Foundations became the focus of my studies (and eventually) and the focus of my career. What was it in these courses that had a profound impact on me? Two things: content and relevance. Unlike my previous instructor of Educational Foundations's coursework, both instructors took a more expansive view of the discipline. I will never forget the first day of one of those classes. During the standard icebreaker activity in the course when we students were going around the room introducing ourselves by name and program of study, I introduced myself by name and what and where I taught. The professor paused, thanked me for being there as a classroom practitioner, and then told me that his expectation of me on every assignment in the course would be to link course material to my classroom. It was the first time I had been told explicitly to make this connection, in spite of my master's program being in my field (secondary education, English focus). I was unfamiliar with the concept of praxis at that time, but in retrospect see that is exactly what he was demanding of me.

Beyond the content, both instructors viewed relevance as key to engaging their students. They put theory into practice and demanded the same from us. Both instructors would have agreed with all seven purposes of Foundations of Education scholars as set forth by the American Educational Studies Association (2013), though three were of most significance to me as a schoolteacher:

2. Understand and apply normative perspectives on education and schooling, 3. Understand and apply critical perspectives on education and schooling, and 7. Critically analyze current educational policies and practices at national, state, and local levels and their impacts on teaching, learning, and the assessment of P-16 students. (p. 111)

I was able to recognize, for the first time, the importance of the hitherto dry names and events permeating the study of the Historical Foundations of Education.

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I recognized the value of being able to trace elements of my teaching practice back through generations. For example, I was able to ground myself philosophically with the social reconstructionists, and performed curricular revisions to better align my daily practice with what Counts (1939) or Brameld (1945) might do. I recognized that having a belief system of my own was not enough—that every teacher needed to presuppose a vision of the future and work to produce citizens that would allow that future to occur. As such, I infused elements I believed critically necessary to foster thoughtful citizens throughout my assignments and practice. For one example, I taught a technical writing unit to my high school seniors in which they were demanded to produce a business proposal. This was linked to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, so the proposals centered around their vision for moving latter-day pilgrims from London to Canterbury Cathedral and back. In addition to requiring students use elements of Chaucer's stories in their design, I also required my students research the geography and topography of the area in question to examine the environmental impact of the proposals they were generating in my effort at producing ecologically aware students. I was able to measure immediate, if not tremendous, impact when, a week after concluding the assignment, one of my students came in to my class and announced the following: "Yo, Janak Bo, I was driving around this weekend drinking a Coke. I was about to throw that can out the window, but I thought about what we were talking about in here last week, and threw it on my floorboards to take home and recycle."

However many public school colleagues thought I was insane for finding meaning in examining the historical linkages impacting teaching and learning at the contemporary moment. They felt it was more useful to complete coursework predicated on advancing my career. For example, they wondered why I was not working on a degree in public school administration. After all, the vast majority of principals make much more money than schoolteachers.

They also had little understanding of the purpose of studying Educational Foundations. Yet, on occasion, they would ask me about what I was studying. I would generally give them an explanation of how historical forces impact schools, educators, and society. Most of my colleagues would cut me off and stated they cared little about such discussion. However, the material I was studying was revelatory to me. It caused me to adapt and rethink much of my classroom practice. In some cases, such as my use of the project method, it affirmed my practice and provided strategies to improve. Reading Kilpatrick reminded me that there are a spectrum of projects that can take on multiple uses and serve many purposes beyond what I had been using them for (demonstration of understanding). In other cases, such as certain pedagogical techniques I used to foster what I thought were workforce skills, Counts made me realize these were in fact replicating class structures in my students rather than fostering social mobility; as such, I desisted many of these workforce practices.

I did not know how much my study of Educational Foundations impacted by personal and professional development until I was part of an in-service, professional

development program. It was a program that most schoolteachers would dread. The program consisted of an expert highlighting a one-size-fits-all approach to improving instruction. However, the approach, project-based learning, would not be considered meaningful for many educators, since it failed to account for how particular institutional impediments, such as large class sizes and accountability measures, prevented the approach from being infused in their learning communities.

I became aware of the impact of Educational Foundations when the ‘paid expert’ addressed the crowd with an innovative instructional method he created, a variation on the project method. The paid expert claimed, incorrectly, this method was still quite new in education, a statement to which I guffawed. Next, I leaned over to the friends I was sitting with and gave them a quick overview of the development of the method, from Kilpatrick’s (1918) article to the present. They were amused. Evidently, I was a bit more vocal than I intended, as most of the teachers in the room listened to me completely undercut the ‘paid expert. A few even approached me after his presentation to thank me for the insight, though I’m unsure if their comments were related to the value of what I shared or more about my comments giving them the opportunity to tune out the “paid expert.”

After this episode my time in public schools was significantly altered. I was still predictable in my work patterns. I would stay late in my room grading papers and planning curricula. However, several of my colleagues would now join me in my classroom after students were dismissed. They looked for me to supply them with a foundational perspective on an educational issue—a current event or controversy facing our district locally, or the public schools nationally, such as the rise of the accountability movement or expansion of extracurricular activities. Sometimes the conversations would be quick, as I didn’t have a thorough background in the question. Sometimes the conversations would be mini-lessons from me expounding upon the historical or sociological roots of that issue. Sometimes the conversations become debates between various faculty members not about the historic validity of the points I was raising, but about the philosophic intent and current implementation by our district. Occasionally, much to my satisfaction, these conversations engaged faculty who previously had disdained my program of choice.

Near program’s completion, it was my time to complete what some of my current graduate students refer to as “academic hazing” because of the near-ritualistic aspects of this academic rite of passage, comprehensive exams. One of my committee members demanded I write on the following question: “Explain the purpose and validity of the study of foundations of education.” In preparation for the writing, I reviewed all the courses and materials that had impacted my practice and scripted my response that way. That response, far too lengthy to include here, still guides my classroom practice. I share much of my thoughts and explanations with my current undergraduates in a first-day-of-course lecture. The class session begins with such statements as “those who don’t know the past are doomed to repeat it.” It then moves into an explanation of how all professions have a sense of professional history. It concludes with a toolbox metaphor. I describe teacher

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preparation programs as providing students with a set of professional tools and explain that they can either learn to use the tools (develop pedagogy and classroom management among other things) through trial-and-error, or ground themselves philosophically and historically to know what will lead to the most success.

Those of us who engage in the teaching and study of foundations know how critical it is to education and teaching, but I wonder whether we are aware of the foundations of our own field? What have foundations scholars said about the value of our work historically? As I was completing my degree if I had searched, I would have found an emerging body of literature on exactly this topic. Indeed, had I done some digging, I would have realized that the arguments against the foundations of education in teacher training have been going on for generations. I would have recognized that then, as now, responses to these anti-foundational arguments in various academic journals (Butin, 2005a; Kliebard 1995; Mueller, 2006; Murrow, 2006; Violas, 1990; Tozer, 1993; Tutwiler et. al., 2013; Zey et. al., 2006) have been thorough, reasoned, well written, and completely ignored.

I would have found, for example, that Maxine Greene had been writing on the subject since 1976. Greene uses language that is strikingly similar to the present condition to describe teacher education of the time as having a “tendency to present an unexamined surface reality as ‘natural,’ fundamentally unquestionable. There has been a tendency as well to treat official labels and legitimations as law-like, to overlook the constructed character of social reality” (p. 10). Sadly, it was true in 1976, and remains true today.

Greene’s troubling argument was reinforced by Landon Beyer and Kenneth Zeichner’s cautionary 1982 article that was, in their titular words, “a plea for discontent.” In the article, they posit that unfortunately teacher educators possess a “vocational orientation” that falsely sees teacher preparation as an “ideological neutral process.” Those that engage in the study of foundations are frequently found particularly troubling by our administrators, as was the case between myself, and Paid Expert, because we “challenge the spurious assumption of neutrality within the dominant, vocational approach to teacher preparation” (p. 18).

Knowing that I had been, for the most part, more engaged in my teaching career than with learning the culture of academe, my dissertation advisor had one parting conversation with me the evening of my successful dissertation defense. “You are a scholar who is a generalist in the area of foundations of education. You’re a foundations generalist. When you apply for jobs that is what you look for.” Little did he know how prescient, and how necessary, would be that conversation.

Early Career as Faculty

My entire full-time career in higher education has been at the same institution at which I’ve held five positions; while I am not the only scholar with a degree in foundations, I am the only one actively pursuing a research agenda in the field (the others being in clinical areas). I have constantly struggled finding a balance

in presenting my work in a way that was meaningful to my colleagues, to whom foundations of education meant justification for whatever professional belief system in which they engaged, while still being true to myself and the field. To me, scholarship in the foundations of education means applying historical, philosophical, and sociological principles to the study of teaching and learning. Admittedly this is challenging considering the current climate surrounding teacher education programs in which there exists a belief system that if scholarship is not of immediate clinical value and/or generates large external grant funding it is of little value.

I started my career in higher education as an Assistant Professional Lecturer (APL—a faculty position at our university whose job description exclusively is in teaching and service), serving three years in this position before becoming a tenure-line faculty. As an APL, I had to complete a retention packet akin to those on the tenure track. The culmination of the college-level review involves a meeting with the dean. In spite of it not being part of my job description, I had put in a statement of the scholarship in which I was engaging. Little did I know I was about to fire the opening salvo in a battle that would go on for the entire tenure process once I would move to a tenure line position, the battle lines drawn over what it means to work in the foundations of education.

My dean at that time expressed some confusion about my research description. In it, I had written something akin to “I am a foundations of education generalist whose work bridges past and present; I use the historical and philosophical foundations of education to make meaning of contemporary issues and practice.”

“Yes,” my dean began in our conversation, “but what will you be an expert in? In ten years, when people talk about you, they will say there is nobody more knowledgeable about...X. What is X?”

“Foundations of education; using the past to interpret the present,” was my reply.

“There is no such thing,” came from my dean. “Pick an area and become an expert in it. Looking at your dissertation and first publication, why not become expert in school law?”

“Because there are experts in school law, and I’m not one. I’ve never studied it. I studied foundations.”

“Well, if you move to tenure track, what will you call yourself when you attend conferences?”

“A generalist in the foundations of education.”

“There is no such thing as a generalist. If you refer to yourself as this, I will vote against retaining you.”

I was so taken aback by this conversation, I placed a call to my dissertation advisor. He assured me my memory was not faulty on our conversation, and was also taken aback by what had transpired.

Not too long after that conversation, I became tenure track. I was concerned about my research agenda and how to express it in a meaningful way to my colleagues, all of whom apparently had majored and become experts in relatively

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narrow topics of education. They studied literacy practices of five year olds, science education for early adolescents, and so on as opposed to the broad scope of foundations. One full professor whose advice I treasured and thus actively sought offered me a piece of sage wisdom: sometimes, its up to us as tenure-track faculty to educate the people who read our packets. The advice was sage; my application of it was not. My first attempt involved me printing off the purposes of the History of Education Society (“About Us”), and using that as a framing document in my annual report, explaining how my research, service, and teaching supported these purposes. However, it was clear based on their comments that departmental members disregarded this information. That year I received feedback ranging from “why are you not publishing in the same journals as other members of the department?” to “needs to stop wasting time writing a book.”

Soon after I found a source of professional inspiration. The listserv H-Education sponsored a two-day online conversation around the theme “Where does the historian of education fit in education?” (Zey et al., 2006). Moderated by a group of historians of education and open for comments and questions, I found myself invigorated by the tenor. It gave me new ideas on places to find the relevance, and reminded me that I was not alone in my struggles. I printed it off, included it with my tenure materials, and referenced it during my annual report. I was told by my department head, agreed upon by the dean, that I had wasted paper and that I needed to take it out of my packet as nobody would read a statement of that length. A couple department members referenced my quoting the document in my self-study and accused me of sounding “angry and defensive instead of being collegial and productive.” I was told outright by my department head to abandon my current line of research and align my research trajectory with the mission and vision of the department else face termination.

These struggles would continue throughout my tenure process. I knew the day would come when I would face external review, and I couldn’t approach scholars in the field and say “sorry, I wanted to write a historical piece, but I was not allowed.” And so I continued, with each year’s tenure review including comments that would become a give-and-take over years. For example, one piece of scholarship was attacked as lacking a theoretical framework. In the following year’s packet, I explained how historiography is a valid framework for those doing historical research, and received a comment that there was no such thing. I was even told by a colleague that history of education “doesn’t exist.”

Eventually, the year I went up for tenure, I found the balance in my annual reporting to my colleagues by ceasing trying to justify what I did and just doing it. I stopped explaining my journal and conference decisions and simply listed them on my curriculum vitae. I realized that my department would never value my work and stopped trying to justify it to them. I relied on old-fashioned “bean counting”—listing numbers of publications. My external reviews were sound. I earned tenure and promotion. I have been able to focus my post-tenure research more narrowly on foundational work as I interpret it, to use the past to understand

the present. I have been able to conduct archival research without worrying about how my colleagues will interpret what I write and it has been a joy.

Sadly, I have come to understand why my colleagues who favor either the more clinical side of education or the more critically theoretical side do not understand that foundations scholars still exist, still contribute. After all, we live in an age in which the foundations of education are becoming extinct, where we are becoming dinosaurs. While the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) used to at least acknowledge foundations in its purposes, its progeny, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, found online at www.caepnet.org) has eliminated all reference to any foundational knowledge. CAEP has separate standards for traditional teacher education programs (“CAEP Accreditation Standards”) and advanced programs, those granting licensure after a degree had already been earned (“Standards for Advanced Programs”); neither includes any mention of foundations of education. As far as the national accreditors are concerned, the future teachers of America should be completely lacking in any foundational knowledge, so long as they can mindlessly spout whatever the latest research on “best practice” that has come out.

Beyond program accreditation, there is a growing trend to buy into the edTPA (Teacher Performance Assessment). Started by Stanford University in conjunction with the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), the edTPA is a performance-based exit assessment preservice teachers complete while student teaching. It is administered internally but assessed externally. Some states have gone so far as to adopt it as a certification requirement. There are several reasons to be wary of the edTPA, most of which are clearly delineated by Barbara Madeloni (2013): faculty have “concerns about any externally imposed assessment, uncomfortable with the involvement of Pearson, and troubled about issues of informed consent for the field test” with no way for students to opt out. Students are concerned “that they were supposed to produce work about the personal experience of learning to teach to send to an anonymous scorer working as contract labor for a private corporation. . . . Who were they writing to, and why would they reveal the vulnerability of their growth to an unknown stranger? How can you measure their growth within the numerical value of these rubrics?” (pp. 246-247).

Admittedly, because edTPA is a performance-based assessment instead of a standardized test it is better than the examinations historically used as a measure of teacher preparedness, such as the National Teachers’ Exam or Praxis battery. However, beyond the issues raised above, it is extraordinarily troubling from a foundations perspective: while asking for almost token social and theoretical knowledge, it still requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate zero foundational knowledge. As part of the dozens of pages of evidence explaining and justifying their instructional decisions, pre-service teachers never have to discuss why their practice meshes with their philosophy or how it is grounded historically. It is all about immediate relevance, and seeing teaching as a cold practice that can be explicated and disseminated.

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As I have learned time and time again throughout my career, we who study and teach in the foundations of education are perceived in higher education as being lumbering dinosaurs unaware of our own imminent extinction. To extend the metaphor, it is not just one asteroid threatening our well-being but several: elimination of foundations from accreditation standards (CAEP) and evaluation instruments (PRAXIS, edTPA); lack of opportunities for substantive grants; and clinical faculty forgetting that teaching is both an art and a science and that, to be truly “consciously competent,” practitioners need to be well grounded philosophically, sociologically, and historically. Collectively, foundations scholars are both aware of the impending “death from above,” so to speak, and so we must be primed to actively change to avert the disaster.

Recommendations

Sadly, if we can't beat 'em, I have to say let's join 'em. If we truly want to avoid extinction, to remain as valued members of the communities of practice that comprise colleges of education, we can take a page from the current playbooks. We must focus on proving our relevance by proving our content's relevance. It's a fine line we walk between encouraging awareness of the past and becoming obsessed by it. We must be able to bring lessons of the past to the table in current discussions but not necessarily as a *de facto* means of preserving the *status quo*. In order to accomplish this, foundations scholars need to take a multifaceted approach.

Recommendation #1: Get Actively Involved in Policy Decisions

This is not a new suggestion; in fact, Steve Tozer suggested it back in 1994, writing about the emergence of accrediting groups such as NCATE and testing for teachers such as the National Teacher's Exam (to be followed in later years by the Praxis):

[s]keptical of such regulatory efforts, scholars in SFE [social foundations of education] can remain apart from that process, which is likely further to marginalize and deteriorate the quality of SFE and of teacher education. Or, foundations scholars can attempt to influence the regulation itself. (p. 8)

If we don't, the teaching profession will suffer for it. In some cases, this will involve developing tighter relationships with our colleagues within colleges of education. We should actively seek opportunities for professional collaborations in practitioner and academic journals as well as academic. We should step outside the comforts of our academic lives and volunteer to serve on policy committees within all levels of government—from local school boards to state departments of education. We should write pieces for public consumption that share lessons of the past on contemporary educational debates. This activity will allow the general public to see the value of our work in meaningful ways. We have to stop sitting by and allowing our obsolescence.

Recommendation #2:

Re-establish Foundations as a Core Component to Pre-Service Teacher Education

In 1990, at the emergence of E. D. Hirsch's model of cultural literacy, Jonas Soltis asked us to put aside our personal feelings about Hirsch's concept and apply it to education. He termed this shared foundational knowledge that affords conscious competence as "professional literacy," arguing that it should raise "key educational questions." This literacy should develop a common knowledge base around "a set of theoretical frameworks, major concepts, alternative models, competing arguments, and historical precedents" which would afford all educators—pre-service, practicing, and academics—a common language. They could then collaboratively "puzzle of the major perennial, persistent, and profound educational questions that arise in each new generation in different guises and unanticipated forms" (p. 318). Of course, this approach is contingent upon foundations scholars having a seat at the academic table that is teacher education. This approach will only work if everyone who comprise the foundations of education are engaged in this discussion, especially those junior scholars and others who are marginalized by their subject position—as I detailed has happened throughout my career.

To put it another way, Theodore Brameld (1945) provided a solid reason that the Educational Foundations need to exist in the preparation of K-12 teachers. When sharing the results of his "Design for America" project, Theodore Brameld (1945) cautioned that educators on all levels "seem to have forgotten that time consists of three dimensions rather than two" (p. 2). At that time it was the future that was lost; however, in today's world, we are so busy looking at the present, we have lost sight of yesterday's habits and practices. And, as anyone who has operated a motor vehicle can attest, it is much more difficult to move forward without a rear-view mirror. Or, as Maxine Greene (1976) reminded us, the study of Educational Foundations provides students the means to become:

capable of undertaking the kinds of praxis that might transform what they find deficient, surpass what they find inhumane. In the United States today, it seems particularly important for people to achieve a wide-awakeness of this sort—not only for the sake of overcoming ignorance and warding off manipulations, but in order to resist the cynicism and powerlessness that silence as they paralyze. (p. 11)

On the first day of class, I present these arguments to my students. Each unit of study begins with a reminder of the relevance and application of the material we are to discuss. For their part, the students appreciate my approach; as one student rather sadly explained, "I've never had anyone explain the why of these things to me before." Therefore, I find ways to center the Foundations of Education in my classroom. My undergraduate course is seeped heavily in the philosophical and historical foundations of contemporary practice. I also recently designed a "new" graduate course in the history of education, which, in fact, uses a title and number of a Foundations course, which had been allowed to lapse a decade ago. I ingratiate

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myself into every conversation I can, bringing a foundational perspective not only to inform the topic, but to remind the audience that we still exist.

This has meant in terms of past scholarship I have contributed to pieces in practitioner journals, most often referenced in teacher education programs and read by classroom practitioners. I have become familiar with discipline-specific knowledge regarding the history of a particular field in order to contribute to writings used in their discipline-specific teacher education. I have contextualized current debate on reform and the role of charter schools in its proper historical context, reminding reformers that foundations can inform contemporary discussions in meaningful ways. I have grounded conversations surrounding the activity curriculum in the teaching of modern languages in the words of the Progressive-Era forefathers to remind them that foundations can inform their practice. I will continue to serve as second or third author so long as it provides an outlet for continuing the foundational conversation in print and constantly remind the field that foundations is a core component to teacher preparation.

This means in terms of teaching I include foundational notes throughout my curriculum. When teaching my introductory course, I don't just teach the role of social justice in education as it is currently understood but the historical reasons for the need for it and how approaches to it have evolved over time. I remind students that the history of public schools has demonstrated a political swinging pendulum, which leads to a powerful conversation about why the pendulum is currently stuck as it is. In my pre-methods course I don't just teach a variety of instructional strategies, but make students read a foundational thinker such as Kilpatrick and the project method. When we discuss accommodating learning styles in the classroom, we go over the various methods employed from brain modality to Rita and Kenneth Dunn to Howard Gardner. It is easy to tell students they do not need to reinvent the wheel or see themselves in isolation; it is a far different conversation when students are provided the means to realize that on their own

Recommendation #3: Use the Past to Shape the Present

Considering the state of foundations of education within colleges of education today, when asked what I do to keep the discipline vibrant I reply: "I'm an academic dinosaur." If we want to preserve our species, no more accurate summary of our purpose was provided by the wholly antiquated, yet wholly accurate, 1964 article by Paul Nash. In it, he wrote that historians are always in danger of facing "monumental triviality and sublime irrelevance." In order to avoid this debilitating state, historians must do the following:

Of course, one must not read back, must not interpret the past in contemporary terms, must not see the forms of an imperfect past as unfolding inexorably into the more nearly perfect forms of today, and must not use history for missionary or propagandist purposes. But this should not blind one to the complementary realization that history must be relevant, must be useful, must be concerned with issues that are important today. Furthermore, history must make a difference; it

must be concerned with action...in the sense that its study should make one's judgments, choices, decisions, and actions wiser, more profound, more sophisticated than they have been. (p. 6)

Wise. Profound. Sophisticated. Not adjectives used about dinosaurs; sadly, not adjectives often used for scholars of Foundations of Education. We must take up Nash's challenge in future teaching and research. We must use our knowledge to inform the present. We cannot be reactive in our research endeavors; we need to be proactive. We must be vocal and public in our conclusions. We must become active outside of our current organizations, sharing our views both in academic and popular presses. We must remind people that the past, when interpreted properly, is relevant to the present across contexts. We must not allow ourselves to become obscure or extinct.

Conclusion

Foundations scholars have been struggling for years with proving ourselves and justifying why we do what we do. I have seen this first hand as my career has evolved from the classroom into higher education. Now more than ever, however, the threat of our extinction is not theoretical but imminent. As summarized by Tozer and Miretzky (2005), foundations programs face two challenges: compensating for the "loss of the protection of social foundations courses when state curriculum requirements are reduced or eliminated in favor of outcome assessments" and demonstrating how "foundations preparation actually contributes to success in these outcome assessments." The authors "predict grim times ahead for social foundations" as well as "for teachers and school administrators" (p. 14).

As Dan Butin (2005b) cites in the Preface of his edited collection *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues* there are 1,400 teacher education programs in the nation; however, while most of the teachers prepared by these programs "have taken some coursework in the social foundations of education," less than two-thirds of these courses are taught by faculty with a degree in field, and the core of the foundations—history and philosophy of education—is cited as being "the least enjoyable for most instructors to teach" (2005b, pp. xiii-xiv). This point is affirmed by Wayne Urban, who cites that membership in the History of Education Society, which grew to 570 members in 1977, declined to 475 in 2009 (though membership had been steady for that decade) (2010, pp. 445-446). While Urban is reassured in the membership numbers, he does put them in the troubling greater context that there are "static, or even declining numbers of tenure track faculty in colleges and universities, and the even grimmer employment picture for historians of education as historians of education" (p. 453).

In his address as President of the History of Education Society, James Fraser lamented the current state of the field, commenting that he is "deeply worried about the future of the History of Education as a field." Among his worries: while in the past future teachers took two or three courses in historical foundations, at present

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“only a small minority of aspiring teachers in the United States have the opportunity to study the History of Education”; that other branches of the foundations are “in even worse shape” as “even a single foundations course...is becoming rare in most teacher education programs”; and that “far too few History of Philosophy or Political Science departments are picking up the slack; either in terms of including education in their subject matter, offering courses for prospective teachers, or in providing jobs for our doctoral candidates” (2015, p. 2). He concludes with an accurate, but sad, metaphor:

The reality is that the humanities are under siege across the university...Ask colleagues in history, philosophy, or other humanistic fields about enrollments and funding and they are not for the most part optimists...And we, Historians of Education, and our colleagues in all the so-called foundations fields are the humanities faculty of ed schools. (p. 7)

The timing of this extinction is ironic as now more than ever there is a critical need for practitioners to, in the words of Maxine Greene (1984), “conceptualize what is happening against the background of our history, to distinguish between polemic and serious proposals, to understand that values and goals cannot simply be legislated into existence.” Ultimately, “administrators and teachers in actual schools” need to understand the difference “between seeing the world small and seeing it big” (p. 2). Those involved in public education who lack a foundational basis are doomed to see the world small, to continue to believe that we only need to be prepared in the latest clinical methodology to become good teachers.

This belief comes at the expense of our understanding of producing good citizens, of recognizing the humanity within the students before us, of evaluating contemporary programs through a variety of lenses. It comes at the expense of teaching ever evolving past its current status as a semi-profession and of foundations scholars ever moving into the forefront of teacher education programs. It makes us dinosaurs in our own profession, when we actually are necessary to preserve the ecosystems that are teacher education programs. Now more than ever, the time is nigh for us to lumber forth and demonstrate not just our relevance but our necessity.

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